LETTERS

ON THE

PRESENT DISTURBANCES

IN

GREAT BRITAIN

AND HER

AMERICAN PROVINCES

——— opes nimias mundo fortuna ſubacto
Intulit, & rebus mores ceſſere ſecundis.

LUCAN.

LONDON

REPRINTED MDCCLXXVII.

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PRESENT DISTURBANCES

IN

GREAT BRITAIN

AND THE

AMERICAN COLONIES.

LONDON:

Finding, by the conversation of my fellow-travellers here, that many of them were still unacquainted with the true nature of the dispute between England and America, I have caused to be reprinted some copies of these letters, for their better information. I flattered myself that they were sufficiently clear, two years ago; but if any passages in them appeared, at that time, obscure or doubtfull, the late conduct of the Americans may be adduced as their best Commentary.

Rome, February 22
1777

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE two letters signed BRITANNICUS, which form the main body of this little collection, were first printed in the Public Advertisers of the 25 and 28 of January 1768, a few days after a petition from a set of Merchants of London had been presented to the House of Commons in favour of the Americans; and when Petitions of the same kind were foretold and expected, by the Leaders of Opposition, from all the other trading and manufacturing towns. From the Public Advertiser, these Letters were immediately reprinted in the London Chronicle, and by that channel conveyed to the most distant parts of the Kingdom. With what effect they were read is difficult to say; but the crowds of Petitions, which had been so confidently announced, never made their appearance; while some others were presented of a quite contrary tendency.

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GR III 10
BRITISH MUSEUM

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firſt printed in the Public Advertiſer *of the* 18. *of April* 1771, *being the laſt of ſix which had appeared with the ſame ſignature. The other five had for their ſubject the Petitions and Remonſtrances preſented to the King, by certain knots of the people, adviſing him to diſſolve the Parliament, on account of ſome alledged misbehaviour of the Houſe of Commons: a moſt prepoſterous attempt, and to which nothing ſimilar is to be found in all the annals of England. The memory of this whole tranſaction has been ſince obliterated by attempts of a much deeper dye: ſo that the revival of any reaſonings upon it would be, at this time, very litle intereſting to the Public: but we have reprinted the laſt of thoſe ſix letters, as it endeavours to point out the cauſe of that diſorder in the State, of which the London Remonſtrance and the American rebellion are only different ſymptoms.*

LETTERS
ON THE
PRESENT DISTURBANCES
IN
GREAT BRITAIN

THURSDAY, April 18, 1771.

To the Printer *of the* Public Advertiſer.

SIR.

WHOEVER has made any obſervations on the manner in which political diſputes of the greateſt importance to the ſafety of States have been carried on, cannot fail of obſerving, that the diſputants, eager in their little daily attacks or defences, never look above an inch, either before or behind them, towards the ultimate conſequence, or the original ſource of their diſſention; but, like ſilly phyſicians, unmindful of the cauſe, are ever buſily employed in curing every new ſymptom of the diſtemper, without being awakened from their ſhort-ſighted practice by ſeeing the patient hourly verging towards his grave.

How came the Miniſtry, ſays one of theſe, to ſuffer George Onſlow to meddle with the Printers?

To which trifling queſtion is immediately returned as trifling an anſwer, and deeper they never get. But thoſe who are able to extend their view to general facts, will eaſily find ſuch as are more worthy their attention, and which might ſuggeſt more ſignificant queſtions. They will find that there has been, for theſe eight or nine years, a ſtudied train of inſult pointed at all Perſons in authority, for the obvious purpoſe of galling, intimidating, and rendering them odious or contemptible to the People: that all theſe inſults, at the time of committing them, were judged, by the moſt cool and conſiderate, to be deſerving of ſevere punishment. and yet, that all the attempts which have been made by thoſe in adminiſtration to punish ſuch offences, have been afterwards almoſt as generally condemned, as illega in their mode, and inconvenient in their conſequences. They will find that theſe miſmanagements havel been conſtantly imputed to the ignorance or folly of the Miniſters who commenced, or who carried on the ſeveral proſecutions; and perhaps was one of the cauſes of the frequent changes which have been made of them: and yet that the change of men never made any change, for the better, in the meaſures; the ſame illegal management having been imputed to them all ſucceſſively; with this ſingle difference, that the laſt Miniſter was always found more unſucceſsful than his predeceſſor.

It would be an irrational as well as a harsh ſuppoſition to ſuppoſe that all the experienced Stateſmen of England, aſſiſted by the advice of the moſt learned lawyers, had acted, for a courſe of years, like fools or cowards: nor, were I willing to make ſuch a ſuppoſition, would there be found any Party of men willing to ſubſcribe to it; as the Leaders of each Party would be neceſſarily involved in the general condemnation. We are therefore conſtrained to believe that their miſcarriages were not ſo much owing to their miſconduct, as to the ſituation of things in which they were called to act. If this ſhould happen to be the caſe, as I am perſuaded it is, it will be in vain to hope for an end to theſe diſturbances, from a change of men, or even from a change of conduct, without ſome change in our general ſituation.

To bring about ſuch changes, probably requires more than a mere ſpeculative genius, and therefore not within my department: but, as people got into a labyrinth will find no better method of extricating themſelves than by recollecting how they came in, I will endeavour to give a few hints with regard to the ſteps by which our affairs have been brought into this ſituation; which, though confined to the narrow compaſs allowed by a news-paper, will be ſufficient to ſerve as a clue to ſuch of your readers as are willing to enter into a more compleat inveſtigation of the ſubject.

There are two great maxims admitted in this Country of freedom: the one, that *no man ought to be punished but by the known laws of the land*: the other that the *salus populi*, the safety of the community, is the *supreme law*. Of these two maxims, one regarding the security of the individuals, the other the safety of the Whole, the last has ever been, with great justice, entitled to the preference; as Common-sense informs us, that where the Whole is in danger none of the Parts can be safe: and therefore, not only in our's but in every government, free or arbitrary, the guardianship of this supreme law has been, in a peculiar manner, committed to the supreme executive power of the State; checked, however, more or less, in free countries, by laws wisely framed for the security of the individuals.

From the beginning of the English Monarchy this executive power was entrusted with the King, both for the defence of the kingdom against invaders, and for preserving the internal quiet of it: he exercising this power, as occasion should require, by a Right known in our laws and Constitution by the name of Prerogative; a Right in the beginning very extensive, but which was first limited by the feudal Rights of the Barons, and in late times much more by the Commons assembled in Parliament. Nor, to a certain degree, were those late limitations improper or unnecessary:

as the Princes before the Revolution had often employed this Prerogative for foolish and oppreſſive purpoſes; particularly that of obtruding their own religious opinions upon the People, contrary to the Rights of mankind, and the nature of things. But, on the other hand, it is no leſs true, that the Commons in Parliament, having a more anxious care for perſonal ſecurity than for public order, put no bounds to their reſtrictions of Prerogative; and at laſt reduced the only executive power of the State to a condition which was inſignificant, as well as harmleſs.

Thus matters ſtood at the Revolution, when the King was left with the command of a brave and loyal body of troops, without being aware that the laws were ſo contrived in favour of the ſeditious, under the notion of ſecuring the Liberty of the Subject, that he could not employ any of this armed force to protect his Courts of juſtice, his two Houſes of Parliament, or even the gate of his own palace, from popular inſolence; without a breach of ſome law of the land.

For about ſeventy years this evil was neither felt nor underſtood; and perhaps, to ſpeak more properly, it was during that period no evil. An even balance of power, then exiſting between the Rulers and the reſt of the Community, created that mutual awe in which conſiſts the eſſence of order and liberty; and prevented an enquiry into

the elementary principles and Rights of Govetnment; which never become the objects of public enquiry till the political machine is fallen of itſelf into diſorder. Upon ſudden and accidental Rebellions, Parliament provided ſufficiently for the ſafety of the Whole, by lending to the Crown that legal ſpecies of dictatorial power which is produced by a temporary ſuſpenſion of the Habeas corpus Act: and upon ſmaller occaſions, where the utility was manifeſt, the Crown exerciſed of itſelf ſome remains of its accuſtomed powers, ſuch as the iſſuing *General Warrants*; without their illegality being conſidered either by King or People. The People entertained few jealouſies of the Crown, which they knew was abundantly circumſcribed; and none at all of the Houſe of Commons, by which their liberty lived, moved, and had it's being. The extent of it's powers, by the name of *Privilege*, was held as a ſacred myſtery, which it was High Treaſon againſt the Majeſty of the People to pry into: and Mr. Walpole was diſqualified, and the Honourable Alexander Murray was lodged, during pleaſure, in Newgate; without ſuch exertions of power having been reckoned either illegal in themſelves, or dangerous to the Commons, for whom, and by whom, they had been, in fact, exerciſed.

Were it poſſible to make laws for a free people of ſuch complaiſant ſtuff that they might contract and dilate themſelves, as the real affairs of that

people should be contracted or dilated, their political ſyſtem being once happily conſtituted, might be for ever preſerved in the ſame happy ſtate, without almoſt a poſſibility of political diſſentions or civil wars. But unluckily it is the nature of things to move, while it is the nature of laws to ſtand ſtill; and we ought no more to wonder at the troubles ariſing from their unfitneſs than that a grown man should find himſelf uneaſy and ridiculous in a coat which had been made for him when a boy. The more proſperous any free country is, and the faſter it grows, either by commerce or conqueſt, the more it is ſubject to theſe returns of civil diſſention, which ariſe from a deficieney in the powers of Government, or, what is the ſame thing, to a diſproportionate increaſe of wealth and power in the individuals.

The preſent diſturbances had their immediate riſe from the ſucceſſes of the laſt war, which, while it impoverished the State by an addition of ſixty millions to it's debt, and diſperſed it's ſmall military force in guarding new acquiſitions of territory, threw immenſe ſums into the pockets of private perſons. Theſe men, after being ſatiated with every ſpecies of luxury which their money laid open to them, ſoon felt a new appetite ariſe for rank and dignity; but being moſtly of the loweſt claſs, with regard to education or connections, they found but

one way of gratifying this appetite, which was by purchaſing ſeats in the Houſe of Commons. Many attempts of this ſort were accordingly made at the General Election in 1761, and ſince that time, ſome of which ſucceeded, and others failed. But thoſe which ſucceeded, and thoſe which failed equally ſerved to ſpread this newly acquired money to a larger circle, and in ſuch a manner as to give thoſe who received it, along with the money, a high idea of their own importance; ſo that they all began to think themſelves entitled to a ſhare in the honours and emoluments of Government, which in reality can only be the lot of a few. Hence aroſe a general hatred to the few in poſſeſſion, the true ſource of which being ridiculous and ſhameful, could not be ſuffered to appear in it's genuine ſhape, but was ready to vent itſelf in a full chorus of lamentations upon any miſmanagement of the public affairs, real or pretended.

While a free State preſerves it's equilibrio, and every thing flows eaſily in it's accuſtomed channels, the firſt poſts in Government are always filled by perſons whoſe hereditary honours and eſtates give them a ſort of proſcriptive right to them; and new men, of the greateſt talents and accomplishments, are ſeldom promoted to any offices above thoſe of the middling rank. But, when once confuſion, and with it danger and difficulty, make their appearance, there is no height to which men of addreſs and

boldneſs may not aſpire; tho' deſtitute of birth, fortune, and character. Some of thoſe, taking their cue from the encreaſing tone of preſumption and diſcontent, ſtood forth, as writers and orators, to revile their rulers, firſt with more, afterwards with leſs reſerve; feeling, by little and little, that thoſe Rulers were not ſo able to punish as the popular Party was to ſupport and reward them. From the ſame motives ſeveral ambitious Lawyers, and even Judges, enliſted themſelves under the popular banner, and pointed out to the common people many weak parts in the Laws for preventing or punishing ſeditious practices, which, without their aſſiſtance, never would have been known.

Nor were the King's Servants altogether wanting in their contributions to this maſs of diſorder; for actuated either by the fear of clamour and inſult, or by the vain hope of popularity, they all in their turn ſacrificed the Rights of Government, and the intereſt of the Public, to the rabble of the City of London, whoſe nearneſs and noiſe made them be conſidered as repreſenting the whole rabble of England. Want of ſtrength was the real inſpirer of thoſe meaſures, and weakneſs was the reſult of them. But of all their palliatives, the moſt deſtructive was that of admitting the moſt violent and foul-mouthed of their Oppoſers into places of truſt; by which they changed their quality of avowed enemies into the more miſchievous one of timid or treacherous friends.

In the courſe of theſe prepoſterous tranſactions we have ſeen every thing relating to Publiclaw or Government turned, as it were, upſide down. The American diſclaims the authority of the British Legislature, and inſiſts upon the Right of taxing himſelf at his own pleaſure. The Coal-heaver becomes his own employer, and inſiſts upon the Right of regulating his own wages. The outlawed Culprit breaks into the Court of Juſtice, and, regardleſs of the tip-ſtaves, arraigns his Judge; who, feeling his own helpleſs ſituation, is forced to plead before the Criminal, and to exert his eloquence in defence of his own conduct. The Livery of London, who by reaſon of their number, and of their being already repreſented in Parliament, are prohibited by Law and Common-ſenſe from meeting in a Body to deliberate upon any propoſition whatever, make their firſt eſſay in a Remonſtrance to the King againſt both Houſes of Parliament; and this abſurd Remonſtrance is not only received, but received upon the Throne, with the ſame reſpect as if it had come from the two Houſes of Parliament themſelves. The ſerving an Order of the Houſe of Commons to bring a Printer before them, is deemed by the Printer an aſſault, and the Meſſenger is committed to priſon for it by the Magiſtrates of London; while Mr. Sheriff Harley, the late Duke of Bedford, and the preſent Lord North, are wounded in open day-light in the exerciſe of their public duty; without ſuch outrages being

deemed aſſaults, or at leaſt ſuch as could bring the offenders to punishment.

Such are the ſymptoms of a more than ordinary diſorder in our political ſyſtem, and which can only be rectified by extraordinary means. Theſe muſt be employed, either in reducing the ſituation of Things to a conformity with the preſent Laws; that is, by reſtoring to every order of the Commonwealth that natural poiſe which, without the help of force, may keep them all firm in their ſeveral places: or, if this is thought a task out of human reach, in bringing our Laws to a conformity with the real ſituation of Things; by contriving artificial equivalents to ſupply the deficiency of this natural poiſe; by placing a proper degree of Force in the hands of thoſe who are already veſted with Authority, or, in other words, by providing an executive pover ſuitable to the preſent riches and extent of the British Empire.

God forbid that quiet ſhould be reſtored to us by tumultuous or arbitrary means; or that we ſhould ever have occaſion to ſay with Lucan, *Cum Domino pax iſta venit*.

I am, Sir,

Your conſtant Reader,

Pall-mall, April 13. MARCELLUS

WEDNESDAY January 25, 1775.

To the Printer *of the* Public Advertiſer.

SIR.

AFTER a great deal of unavailing argumentation, the diſpute between the Americans and us ſeems now to be reduced to the ſingle queſtion, Whether we are able by force to reduce them to obedience or not? It is a mere queſtion of fact, in which, as the Lawyers ſay, the parties join iſſue; and ſo is ready to be ſent to trial, without any farther demurring: leaving the cauſe to be finally decided, as the weight of evidence, ſhall preponderate in favour of one ſide or the other.

That the power which ſo lately carried on a ſucceſsful war, againſt the united forces of France and Spain, ſhould not be able to ſubdue a parcel of Planters and Merchants, who have no fleet, no army, no public treaſury, no artillery or military ſtores; and who have no reſpectable Head of authority to produce uniformity of conduct, or to prevent mutiny and ſedition in thoſe who, from a ſpirit of ſedition only, take upon them to be ſoldiers, is what no man will eaſily conceive, who is in the leaſt acquainted with the hiſtory of human dealings.

At the ſame time, in examining how the powers of Great Britain are to be brought to act hoſtilely againſt the Americans; I am ſenſible of ſome difficulty; the cauſes of which I ſhall here endeavour to inveſtigate.

The English Nation has hitherto divided the whole human race into two claſſes only; viz. Foreigners, who are always ſuppoſed to be, at bottom, enemies; and Engliſhmen, who are always ſuppoſed to be, at bottom, friends to England. In compliance with this diſtinction, not ill founded in the nature of things, two very different plans of conduct have been conſtantly followed by the people of England, whenever any inſult has been offered by the one or by the other of thoſe two claſſes to any branch of their government. Were, for inſtance, a Captain of a French or Spaniſh man of war to order the cockswain of an Engliſh long-boat to be tarred and feathered in the Bay of Campeachy, the news would put all England in an uproar: Fleets would be immediately fitted out, Officers put into commiſſion, and men preſſed at every port, to reſent the affront put upon the Britiſh flag; and all this, without any cool or regular examination into the fact, or how far the cockswain might not have drawn this feathering upon himſelf by his own inſolence. Should the Miniſtry ſhew any backwardneſs in ſeconding this ardour in the people, and treat this feathering as a *teterrima belli cauſa*; their eternal oppoſers would not fail to lay hold of

ſo favourable an occaſion of repreſenting them as traitors to their country, and of driving them out of their ſo much wished-for places. If, on the contrary, the Miniſtry should engage heartily in a war, the moſt hungry Orator amongſt the Patriots would not dare to open his mouth againſt them.

On the other hand, the groſſeſt inſults offered by an Engliſhman, not only to an inferior officer, but to the higheſt perſons and departments in the Government, and which manifeſtly lead to other practices totally ſubverſive of the State, are treated with the utmoſt temper and moderation. If he is called to account for this offence, he becomes immediately the favourite of the populace, and zealously ſupported by the minority in both Houſes of Parliament. Though the laws of England are of themſelves ſufficiently formed for the protection of the individuals, every quibbling interpretation of them, by every factious or mercenary Lawyer, is readily admitted in his defence; none againſt him. Every evidence againſt him is examined with the utmoſt ſcrupulouſneſs, and every informality in the mode of trial is allowed to operate in his favour. And laſtly, his Jury, who are much more nearly allied to him than to his accuſers, are eaſily induced not ouly to let him come off unpunished, when every rational man eſteems him punishable, but may poſſibly ordain heavy damages to be given to him by his proſecutors for

any irregularities they may inadvertently have fallen into in the courſe of their proceeding.

When we look back for the cauſe of this extraordinary heat of the English, in reſenting the affronts done to thoſe who repreſent their State in one of thoſe caſes, and of their no leſs extraordinary coolneſs in the other, it plainly turns out to be this: That any contempt ſhewn by a foreign power to their rulers, is ſuppoſed to be levelled at the whole community, and at every individual of it; whereas the inſults of an Engliſhman, who is himſelf a member of the community of England, and intereſted in its welfare, cannot be ſuppoſed to mean any miſchief to it, or to his fellow-citizens; and the ſpirit of liberty, which requires them to have always a jealous eye to the conduct of their rulers, naturally inclines them to take part with any one of their own body who complains of an undue exertion of power, and to overlook the demerits of the complainer.

If the Government of England were to have no diſputes to ſettle with any but meer foreign States, or meer Engliſhmen, the experience they have acquired in the conflicts of ſeveral centuries paſt, would be ſufficient to guide them in any new emergencies of a like kind: but unfortunately, there has lately ſtarted up to view in America a new claſs of men, who will be found upon examination to belong to neither of thoſe two claſſes; who for that reaſon, give great perplexity both to the Government and

people of England, and muſt ever continue to perplex them till their true nature, and their true relation to Great Britain is accurately known, and a ſuitable mode of proceeding with regard to them adopted.

Being deſcended from an Engliſh ſtock; ſpeaking the Engliſh language; holding amongſt themſelves laws, cuſtoms, and religion, ſomewhat ſimilar to thoſe of England; being in the practice of calling themſelves *Engliſhmen*, and us *brethren*, they have artfully perſuaded the people of England that they are their fellow-citizens, and Engliſhmen like themſelves, to all intents and purpoſes. But this is altogether a fallacy. Similarity of language or deſcent do not confer upon a man the Rights of any community; nor does the want of them preclude him from thoſe rights, if he happens to be furniſhed with the more eſſential requiſites. A native of Languedoc or Dauphiny, who ſells his lands, and, with his family and effects, comes over to ſettle in England, becomes upon his landing as good an Engliſhman, in every political ſenſe of the word, as any man born in the Iſland; and if he is not completely ſo in the eye of the law, it is becauſe our law is not able to diſtinguiſh, at firſt ſight, the ſtrangers who come into England with the fixed purpoſe of ſettling, from thoſe who do not. In like manner a native Engliſhman, who leaves England to ſettle in Languedoc, and there purchaſes lands, or enters into partnerſihp in trade or manufactures with Frenchmen, becomes himſelf

a Frenchman to all intents and purpoſes. He cannot owe allegiance to two different Sovereigns at the ſame time, and therefore pays it to the King of France, from whom he receives protection; forfeiting all the rights of citizenship he held in his native country, to which he is thus become a commercial rival, and political enemy; for *where the treaſure is, there will the heart be alſo*.

An American Engliſhman, according to his own deſcription of himſelf, ſeems to differ but in one circumſtance from this Frenchified Engliſhman; and that is, in his not having come under the allegiance of any foreign Prince; by which it muſt be allowed that he is not completely a foreigner. But his allegiance to the King of England is of a very weak and ambiguous kind; little more than nominal: as he acknowledges him only in his feudal capacity, as Lord of the Manor of Greenwich, or of Windſor Caſtle; renouncing him in his more exalted character of Head of the Britiſh Empire, and third part of its legiſlative power. He allows that his own ſituation excludes him from having any ſhare in the legiſlature of Great Britain; and affirms that it has no right to tax him, as it taxes Engliſhmen.

Theſe are ſome of the principal features by which an American is, by his own account, to be diſtinguiſhed from an Engliſhman of this country; but they are likewiſe the features of an Alien, not of our fellow-citizen. Nor do the marks of an Alien

appear ſtronger in thoſe political circumſtances, than in his intereſts as a landholder, a merchant, and a manufacturer: For, ſo far from our having a common intereſt with the Americans, in which the great characteriſtic of citizenship conſiſts, the proſperity of their trade and manufactures would have long ago ruined England, had it not been for that tyrannical and unconſtitutional power, as they call it, of the British Parliament, which has put a variety of fetters upon their trade, and made it ſubſervient to ours; very little with their own conſent, as appears by many paſſages in their late manifeſtos from Philadelphia.

When a Boſtonian tells us, *he carried the free conſtitution of England with him to America*, it is very difficult to ſay what he means. But if we may be allowed to explain his meaning by the help of the fact itſelf, he can only mean, that he left England to become a freeman of a corporation, ſettled in a far diſtant country, by a charter from the King of England: that the internal policy of this corporation was formed upon the model of that of England: that he had there his Houſe of Commons in which he was repreſented, and which had the right of impoſing taxes upon him for the purpoſes of this corporation: that he had a Council which anſwered to our Houſe of Peers; and that, to make this a complete Parliament like that of England, a Bailiff or Governor from the King of England was ſent to preſide in it. Suppoſing all this ſimilitude to be juſt, as in fact it

is not; for an American Council is exceedingly unlike an hereditary Houſe of Peers; yet when the whole, or any of the parts of an American Government, is put ſide by ſide with the whole, or any of the correſponding parts of the Government of England, ſo different in its nature as well as magnitude, the compariſon produces ſomething completely ridiculous. Mr. Hancock may be a very good Engliſhman amongſt Boſtonians, and he has reaſon to thank God for the enjoyment of ſo valuable a priviledge; but it is fit for him, at the ſame time, to know, that Boſtonians, politically ſpeaking, are no more Engliſhmen, or their Aſſembly a Parliament, than their Governor, Gage, is a King.

To hinder us from perceiving that they are not Engliſhmen or our Fellow Citizens, the Americans have availed themſelves of every ambiguity in our language. They have called, themſelves our *Fellow Subjects*, knowing, all rhe while, that they acknowledge themſelves to be ſuch, only from a circumſtance which belongs to them in common with the people of Hauover. They have talked conſtantly of their *Mother Country*, and have founded their abſurd pretenſions on their British deſcent; when they know. that there, are thouſands amongſt them who join in thoſe demands upon their *Mother Country* who were born in Weſtphalia, and who owe their rights of American Engliſhmen merely to an Act of that Legislature, the authority of which they join in

diſclaiming: and they have lately talked to us, in the tragic ſtrain, about the horrors of a *civil war*, when they know, that, let the war in America be ever ſo horrible, there will no true Engliſhman fall in it, except he be from amongſt thoſe brave men who have lately ſailed from England with red coats upon their backs, to vindicate the important rights of their countrymen. But all this juggling, of which the detail is infinite, muſt loſe its effect upon Engliſhmen, whenever they come to be diſtinctly informed, that the Americans are not their fellow-citizens, but their ſubjects; and that it is to be independent of them, not of the Parliament, which ſeparate from the people of England has no meaning at all, that is the great object of the preſent American ſtruggles.

With this ſingle light, the people of England will be able to ſee through all the ſophiſtry of the American Pamphleteers; who, having no ſenſe of their own, borrow ſome from Locke, and then turn it into nonſenſe by their miſapplication of it. They will ſee, that all they have ſaid about *taxation going hand in hand with repreſentation*, and which Locke expreſsly confines to *free men*, *members of a free ſtate*, was never meaat to be applied to our Americans, who, though they are free men, as individuals, and as far as regards their own provincial Government, are not in a free and independent State with reſpect to England. They will ſee, that notwithſtanding the deep and important maxim,

that every man's property is his own; and that other no leſs wonderful diſcovery, *that it is no better than robbing a man to take his property from him without his own conſent*: yet that the Americans are ſtill liable to be juſtly taxed by the English: inaſmuch as no man who is indebted to other people has a right to call any thing he poſſeſſes *his own*, till all his debts are diſcharged: that, in the mean time he muſt acknowledge a right in his creditors of taking from him *what belongs to them*, whether he will or not; and that he muſt not think of excluding from the number of thoſe creditors the perſon to whom he owes much for ſupport and protection, and without whoſe ſupport and protection he would never have been poſſeſſed of any thing at all. The Americans are certainly not repreſented in the British Parliament, and from what I have already ſaid of their ſituation and circumſtances, it is impoſſible they ever ſhould: not from the impoſſibility of ſending Members from a great diſtance, a circumſtance in which the inhabitants of Rhode Island do not eſſentially differ from thoſe of the Orkneys; but from the incompatibility of their partial intereſts with ours, in matters of trade and manufactures, which would make their admiſſion into our Councils a miſchievous abſurdity.

Miniſters of State have ſeldom leiſure, from official buſineſs and parliamentary wrangling, to enter into ſpeculative enquiries concerning the more abſtract

relations of men and things; yet it appears by the late Acts of Parliament for curbing the Americans, that the true relation between them and us, as laid open in this paper, was not unknown to them. It is at leaſt upon this ground that the propriety of thoſe Acts can be beſt defended, and the abſurdity of the complaints againſt them moſt eaſily expoſed. The Americans, for inſtance, complain that trials by Jury, the birthright of every Engliſhman, is taken from them. But this aſſertion, as far as regards them as Boſtonian Engliſhmen, is not in the leaſt true. They ſtill are allowed Juries of their own vicinage for deciding every cauſe, civil or criminal, that can occur with regard to their own affairs within their own diſtrict, as fully as is enjoyed by any Engliſhman in England. But what the Boſtonians moſt unfairly contend for, is to have diſputes between them and the Engliſh nation ſettled by a Jury of Boſtonians; that is, that they be allowed to become, at the ſame time, both Judge and Party-This our Parliament has wiſely provided againſt, by ordering all cauſes reſpecting the public revenue to be tried by the Courts of Admirality; and all treaſons and other crimes and misdemeanors againſt the ſtate of Great Britain, to be tried in Great Britain, or in ſome other part of the British empire, where its ſupreme authority is fully acknowledged. In like manner their complaints againſt the plan of Government eſtabliſhed in Canada, give the ſtrongeſt preſumption

of the wisdom and propriety of it; as thoſe complaints manifeſtly ariſe from the various means provided in that plan to prevent the Canadians from entering into rebellious projects, ſuch as the Boſtonians have lately fallen into, and into which they have been at great pains to draw all their neighbours. The Canadians, upon large and truly Revolution principles, are allowed the free exerciſe of their religion, with full ſecurity for their property by forms of law to which they have been long accuſtomed, and which, while they are more convenient for them than the common law of England, are of perfect indifference to us. But their duty to the British ſtate is marked out in that plan with much more preciſion than has been done in any of the former eſtabliſhments in America; in which there has been more truſted to the gratitude, the juſtice, and common ſenſe of the perſons on whom they were beſtowed, than the event has been able to juſtify.

I have ſtill more to ſay upon this ſubject (and indeed one of the chief obſtructions to our acting hoſtilely againſt the Americans is ſtill untouched) but finding I have already extended this letter to an unuſual length, muſt reſerve what remains for another.

I am, SIR

your moſt humble ſervant

Pall-mall, Jan. 20. BRITANNICUS

THURSDAY January 26, 1775.

To the Printer *of the* Public Advertiſer.

LETTER II.

SIR.

UPON the great principle laid down in my Yeſterday's letter, 'that is the having a 'common intereſt in the welfare of any 'community which entitles a man to be conſidered 'as a member of it, or to have any voice in the 'management of its concerns,' I have hitherto conſidered every man reſident in the iſland of Great Britain, and having no eſtabliſhment any where elſe, as our fellow citizen. Nor is this, in its loweſt degree, a ſlight privilege; or as ſuch eſteemed by the other nations on the continent of Europe: as appears by the numbers of thoſe who daily come over to be enrolled, by reſidence, amongſt us; while few or none of our people are found willing to return them the compliment.

But although the inhabitants of Britain make, with regard to foreigners, but one claſs; yet, upon the great leading principle of citizenſhip, a very little reflection may point out, that there muſt be in that body a great many different claſſes, according to their different degrees of intereſt in the commonwealth; the intereſt of one member being extenſive

and fixed, while that of another may be ſmall and removable. This is no new diſcovery of mine: Every well-conſtituted republic, every wiſe legiſlature has attended to it; and has accordingly divided its citizens into a variety of claſſes, allotting to each claſs a ſhare in the management of the public concerns, in proportion to its ſhare of intereſt in them; excluding altogether from the political functions of citizenſhip that moſt numerous claſs made up of thoſe, who, having nothing at all of their own, have little or nothing to loſe by any misfortune which might befall their country.

As no form of republic has been, in the general opinion of mankind, more happily contrived than that of England; ſo there is none in which the attention to this great maxim has been more conſpicuous. Our wiſe anceſtors conſidered land as the only ſpecies of property that could be called fixed or local; the only kind that neceſſarily attached the owner to his native ſoil; and the only kind that could make him extend his care to its future, as well as to its preſent proſperity; and therefore they conſidered no man as a political member of the community of England, or as qualified to be conſulted on the management of its public affairs, either in perſon or by a repreſentative, unleſs he were a landholder. They conſidered that, without his being either a merchant, manufacturer, or labourer, every ſcheme for the advancement of the trade or improvement of the

manufactures of England; every ſcheme that ſhould be propoſed for the eaſe and happineſs of the labouring people; every ſcheme by which their numbers might be increaſed, and their emigration prevented: and, in ſhort, that every propoſal tending to promote the public happineſs and ſafety, in which he and and his poſterity had ſo permanent an intereſt, would be felt by him as his own private concern, and be treated with rhe ſame zeal and ſincerity. On the contrary, they conſidered a man who had no eſtate but what aroſe from the labour of his hands, or from his ſkill and dexterity in ſome art, or from ſuch property as might eaſily be crammed into a knapſack, as a ſlippery kind of fellow citizen; who, knowing how eaſily he might withdraw himſelf, and all that belonged to him, from his native country, might look with indifference upon its approaching ruin in which he was not to be involved, and from which he might poſſibly reap ſome advantage.

Such was the wiſdom of our anceſtors: but the eſtabliſhments of men, like their bodies, are but of limited growth and duration; having always ſome lurking diſeaſe, which, in the midſt of their moſt blooming health, is gradually forwarding their diſſolution. By a long train of cauſes, ſeemingly tending to the happineſs and greatneſs of this country, the landed intereſt has gradually loſt that weight which it originally had in the ſcale of Government; and has, upon many occaſions, been forced to give

way to the weight and influence of an intereſt ariſing from trade and manufactures, which is of a much more complex and fluctuating kind. A well-conducted Government, happily meeting with a proſperous trade will produce the higheſt degree of national happineſs: but the alliance between thoſe two powers is of a very extraordinary nature; for they will always be found to aſſiſt one another the moſt effectually the leſs they act in concert. When the powers of the ſtate attempt to adjuſt, or ſuperintend the affairs of commerce; when, not contented with holding out freedom to trade, and with protecting the fair trader from fraud or violence, they go farther, and attempt to aſſiſt him in promoting his traffic; they then undertake an office which they cannot be ſuppoſed to underſtand, and in which they can hardly fail of doing miſchief. On the other hand, when merchants are ſuffered to give advice to Stateſmen even in matters which appear of a commercial nature, they ſeldom fail of mixing a ſelf-intereſted dash with their counſels, and of rendering them unſalutary.

The cauſe of all this will become very obvious when we compare the principles of Government with thoſe of commerce, and find how oppoſite they are to one another. The principle of Government is, by union and unanimity, ariſing from ſupreme command and ſubordination, to provide, upon maxims general and extenſive, for the order and ſafety of the whole; whereas the intereſt of commerce is beſt

promoted when each private merchant, without any extenſive view of commerce in general, and without concerning himſelf about the intereſt of his neighbour, or the intereſt of the State, quietly employs his induſtry in his own branch of buſineſs for his own private emolument. For while he is ſaying, "every "man for himſelf," and ſuffers no idea more enlarged to enter his mind, he is in reality contributing his quota to the public good; as the wealth of the community, and the ſtrength of the State, are the certain, though unintended, conſequences of the private gains of ſo many individuals. While riches continue thus to flow, without force or noiſe, through theſe imperceptible, but numerous channels, the intereſt of the merchant, and the intereſt of trade in general, will be exactly the ſame; and the public ſafety will be eſtabliſhed inſtead of being endangered by it. But whenever the merchant, with the rapacious view of extending his traffic beyond its natural bounds, pretends a zeal for the advancement of the national commerce, enters into combinations with other merchants, and loudly calls upon the State to aſſiſt them with its force, then does merchandiſe ceaſe to be uſeful to the public, and inſtead of ſupporting the State, becomes a dead weight upon it.

Of theſe general truths, the two laſt wars carried on by England againſt France and Spain, furniſh a moſt melancholy illuſtration. To obtain the ſole and excluſive commerce of the weſtern world, in which

the French and Spaniards were their rivals, was the modeſt wish of our merchants, in conjunction with our Americans. The fair, and truly commercial, method of effecting this would have been, by ſuperior ſkill, induſtry and frugality, to have underſold their rivals at market: but that method appearing ſlow and troubleſome to a luxurious people, whoſe extraordinary expences required extraordinary profits, a more expeditious one was deviſed; which was that of driving their rivals entirely out of the ſeas, and preventing them from bringing their goods at all to market. For this purpoſe, not having any fleets or armies of their own, the powers of the State were found neceſſary, and they applied for them accordingly. But the reaſons urged for engaging the nation in war not appearing of ſufficient weight to the adminiſtrators of Government, other means were to be employed to force them into the project; ſuch as irritating the ignorant and prejudiced rabble of the trading towns, by ſtories of Spaniſh depredations and French encroachments, many of them untrue, the reſt partially told and exaggerated; till at laſt thoſe artificial clamours, vigorously ſupported by the antiminiſterialiſts in parliament, produced the deſired effect. I ſhall leave it to the hiſtorian to recount the numbers of Engliſhmen who were ſlain, the numbers who were drowned, and the much greater numbers who periſhed by peſtilential climates and unwholeſome diet; with all the reſt of the *pride, pomp and circumſtance of* thoſe two *glorious wars*;

and shall content myſelf with mentioning in a few words, the final reſult and produce of them; which conſiſted of large ſums of money for the pockets of merchants, owners of privateers, contractors and tallow chandlers: a great acceſſion of men, riches, and independency to the American colonies: and to Old England an addition of eighty millions of public debt, to remain a perpetual mortgage upon her lands, after all her merchants, manufacturers and labourers, have quitted the ſilver Thames, and the ſweet-winding Tay, for the pleaſanter banks of the Ohio.

Such are, and ſuch ever will be, the conſequences of a friendly alliance between the camp and the counting-houſe. But now a ſcene of a new and different nature opens itſelf upon us; or rather, a new theatre, on which the ſelfish ſpirit of merchandiſe will exhibit itſelf in a new and different garb. Merchants are not by profeſſion a bloody-minded ſet of men: their end is private gain, and if that can be attained, the mode of attaining it becomes to them a matter of indifference. To reſent exceeding ſmall national affronts, or to pocket exceeding great ones; to trade during a deſtructive and dangerous war, or during an ignominious and unſafe peace; may be equally by turns profitable to them, and may be equally by them recommended to the State: but rotten is that State, and ripe for deſtruction is that nation, where ſuch recommendations have any weight.

The preſent attempt of the merchants trading to America muſt raiſe aſtonishment in every one, who judges of the conduct of men in public affairs upon public principles; and who is not aware, that, as the intereſt of trade may be contrary to the intereſt of the nation, ſo the intereſt of the trader may be, upon ſome occaſions, diametrically oppoſite to the intereſt of trade. For they are now endeavouring, by an accumulation of clamour, under the ſtale pretence of petitioning, to force Parliament, the guardian of our rights, to repeal all the Acts lately made for punishing the paſt, and preventing the futnre inſolence and injuſtice of the Americans; and all this, forſooth; becauſe our treating them with ſeverity might occaſion ſome interruption in their buſineſs, and ſome delay, and perhaps loſs, in their payments: a ſtroke of ſelfishneſs beyond what was to be expected, even from merchants; and is like procuring for themſelves a handful of fruit, by pulling up the tree by the roots. For can there be any one of thoſe merchants ſo ignorant of the nature of mankind as to believe that the Americans will lay aſide all farther projects of independency, upon finding their firſt project has ſo eaſily ſucceeded; or that they will ceaſe their hoſtilities againſt England, upon finding they have an invincible body of auxiliaries in the heart of it? Can there be any one of thoſe merchants ſo dull of comprehenſion as not to perceive, that the Americans conſider them as a body of English

ſeapoys, which they keep on foot in England to aſſiſt them in ſubduing their countrymen; and that they are kept on foot by the ridiculous means of withholding from them their pay, and conſtantly threatening to turn them out of their ſervice? Can there be any one of them ſo ſtupid as not to find out, that the ſame fears for interruption of trade and delay of payments muſt ſtill continue to make them the tools of the Americans, till, link by link, the whole of that chain is diſſolved which hath hitherto bound the trade of America, excluſively to England? And laſtly, when, according to the ſcope of their preſent petition, they have deſtroyed the authority of the British Government in America, and ſet up one entirely American in its ſtead; can there be any one of them ſo credulous as to believe that the property of Engliſhmen will be any longer ſafe in their hands?

Let us not, Mr. Printer, be the dupes any longer of words and appearances; or attempt to hide from one another a Truth, which every American has long felt and underſtood: but the Truth is, that we have no commercial intercourſe, properly ſpeaking, with the Americans at all. Trade is of a free nature, carried on by voluntary contracts between one private man and another, for their mutual benefit; and in which no conſideration is held, whether the contracting parties are fellow citizens or belonging to ſeparate communities, A real merchant is a citizen of the

world, and a moſt valuable one; who enriches himſelf by ſpeeding a friendly intercourſe from nation to nation, and as it were uniting all mankind in one ſociety. Between men and ſocieties altogether independent of one another, no trade can be carried on but what is of this free and genuine kind. The independent merchant will always deal with thoſe who ſupply him with goods upon the moſt advantageous terms; and any interpoſition of power to promote ſuch a trade would be at leaſt uſeleſs, if not deſtructive. But what free or genuine commerce do we carry on with the Americans? I will venture to repeat it, none at all; nor did we ever treat them as cuſtomers, but as ſubjects. The very *Regulations*, as we call them, impoſed upon that trade is a ſufficient proof of what I advance; for a regulated free trade is a contradiction in terms. Regulations can only be impoſed by rulers upon ſubjects; they are almoſt always impoſed for the purpoſe of raiſing a revenue; they are then but a mode of taxation; and the merchant who, under the authority of Government, becomes the inſtrument in carrying on ſuch a forced trade, is no other than a tax-gatherer in diſguiſe. Let the *reſpectable merchants* who aſſemble at the King's Arms in Cornhill take care, let them take care how they countenance the Americans in reſiſting the authority of the British parliament; for that being withdrawn, they will ſoon learn to ſtrip them of their thin mercantile diſguiſe, and apply the tar and feathers

to them as they have done to other exciſemen. When an American has once thoroughly perſuaded himſelf, with the help of miſapplied paſſages from Locke, that the British legislature has no conſtitutional authority over him; and that all its acts are arbitrary and tyrannical, he muſt look upon the French and Dutch ſmugglers, who furnish him with goods at the eaſieſt rate, as the only fair traders; and muſt be bound by his conſcience, as well as his intereſt, to deal with them only. We muſt not fancy we can trifle with the underſtandings of thoſe people, by telling them there is a difference between regulating trade, and impoſing duties for the ſake of raiſing revenue: for they know, and tell us, that all the goods we force upon them have firſt paid towards the revenues of Great Britain; and that they are forced to repay thoſe duties to the people who call themſelves merchants, in the purchaſe of the goods.

Thoſe who ſpeak of returning things to the ſtate they were in before the Stamp Act, try to amuſe us with impoſſibilities; or probably indulge themſelves in the uſe of words to which they have attached no ideas. It is, no doubt, very eaſy for our Parliament to repeal all their late Acts; but nothing leſs than that almighty Power which made the univerſe out of nothing, and with a like word is able to return it to its nothing again, would be able to repeal from the perverted minds of thoſe Americans the impreſſion

which ſuch a conduct would leave behind it. Every Act which had been paſſed againſt them would be produced as ſo many proofs of our folly and injuſtice; every repeal of thoſe Acts, as equal proofs of our weakneſs, diſunion, and timidity; and the preſent difficulties, which have no other foundation than the bare ſuſpicion of our weakneſs, would be multiplied upon us ten-fold. Our rulers, it is to be hoped, will have wiſer Counſellors. Whenever the Gentlemen of the King's Arms tavern are able to produce from hiſtory a ſingle example of ſubjects who, after having denied their Sovereign's rights, and dared him to arms, were brought back to any degree of reſpect and obedience by the gentle means of treaty and accommodation, without any previous chaſtiſement, we ſhall then, and not till then, think their Petition worthy of a ſerious hearing: but if they can produce no ſuch example, then ought they to be aſhamed of their preſumption in departing from their own line, and taking upon them to inſtruct Stateſmen in State affairs of the higheſt importance, without being poſſeſſed of the ſmalleſt tincture of political knowledge.

After all, I am, perhaps, doing injuſtice to thoſe Gentlemen in imputing to their ignorance, or narrowneſs of mind, what may be only the conſequence of an unavoidable peculiarity in their ſituation. They have been called upon by their American correſpondents, with whom a part of their fortunes is diſagreeably entangled, to aſſiſt them in their wild

projects, and, not being able to refuse, may have put their hands to Petitions which in their hearts they disapprove, trusting to the wisdom and firmness of his Majesty and Parliament that their Petitions will be rejected. It is, indeed, from that august quarter, and particularly from the Representatives of the landed gentry, whose all depends on the fate of this island, that the English nation is to hope for any safety. Union and firmness being established in that quarter, very little more is wanted for restoring law, order, and decency, to America. Every common sailor is able to point out to Government how the vain and misled Americans may be reduced, in a few months to any degree of distress our humanity will permit; and be taught, by their dire experience, that the Power which is able to protect is likewise able to punish all those who, having received that protection, ungratefully refuse to make a suitable return for it.

I am, Sir,

your most humble servant

Pall-mall, Jan. 21. BRITANNICUS